



The President's Daily Brief

29 December 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

North Vietnamese troops continue to move forward in northern Laos, while on the Bolovens Plateau government forces are trying to regroup to the west of Paksong. (Page 1)

Additional appointments to the Bangla Desh cabinet maintain the Awami League's monopoly. (Page 2)

London is preparing for a showdown with Malta's Prime Minister Mintoff over his demand to meet his terms [redacted]. (Page 3)

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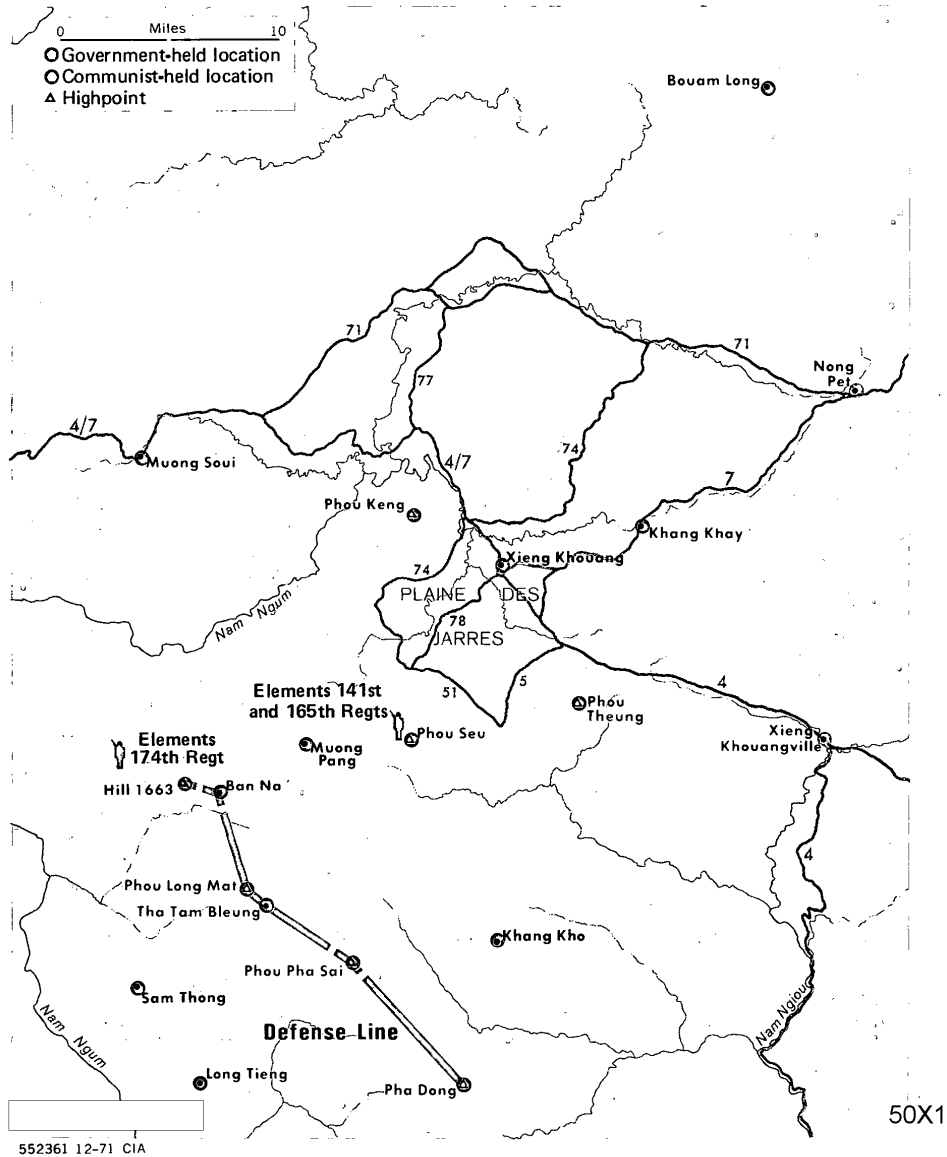
The number of North Vietnamese troops detected moving south in the infiltration system continues to increase. (Page 3)

The Soviets [redacted] India [redacted]
[redacted] (Page 3)

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS

North Vietnamese troops continue to move forward in the Plaine des Jarres area, although there has been little enemy-initiated action. Intercepts indicate that all three battalions of the 174th Regiment now are in the Muong Pang area southwest of the Plaine and that elements of two other regiments are active in nearby foothills. Elements of another regiment appear to be moving westward. An intercept of Monday also referred to shipping additional 130-mm. ammunition to Binh Tram 11, the main forward support base for the Communist units on the Plaine.

In the Bolovens Plateau, government forces that abandoned Paksong on Monday are trying to regroup along Route 23 to the west. Air observers report heavy North Vietnamese troop concentrations just north of the area.

Any significant enemy show of strength is likely to cause the government troops to withdraw farther west. Only one of the eight battalions that pulled out of the Paksong area suffered significant casualties. The others withdrew before any concerted enemy attacks were launched. With the loss of Paksong, southern rightists will be increasingly reluctant to send forces to the North to help in the defense of Long Tieng.

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BANGLA DESH

With the appointment of five additional ministers, ten Awami League members now comprise the Bangla Desh cabinet. Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad told newsmen that several more ministerial appointments would be announced soon, but he ruled out the inclusion of non-Awami Leaguers. He also said that new elections would not be held soon.

Despite the Awami League's landslide electoral victory in East Pakistan a year ago, a variety of leftist groups active in the subsequent independence struggle assert that they have earned the right to share in governing the country. Ahmad has sympathized with this view, but most in his party apparently insist that the Awami League govern alone.

New Delhi and Moscow may yet push to get some of the leftists into a key government role, possibly through a multi-party advisory committee such as was created last September to oversee the Awami League-dominated exile government. There is no evidence that the Indians or the Russians view their relationship with current Bangla Desh leaders as unsatisfactory, however.

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NOTES

UK-Malta: London is prepared for a showdown with Prime Minister Mintooff over his latest demand that the UK meet his financial terms [redacted]

[redacted] Yesterday London made it clear that it would withdraw rather than pay the sum demanded.

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[redacted] London has indicated that it is willing to send Defense Minister Carrington to Malta immediately for further talks.

Indochina: The number of North Vietnamese troops detected in the infiltration system continues to increase. We now estimate that some 56,000 personnel have entered the system since early October. Of this number, about 26,000 are destined for the northern half of South Vietnam, and most of these are headed for the base areas near the central highlands. Another 23,000 are going either to Cambodia or the southern half of South Vietnam, and the remaining 7,000 are destined for southern Laos or northeastern Cambodia.

India-USSR: [redacted]

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USSR - Indian Ocean: The Soviets have sent two cruise missile submarines and five surface combatants to the Indian Ocean since the outbreak of the Indian-Pakistani war on 3 December. With this augmentation, the USSR now has a total of 22 combatants and support ships in the area--the highest number of Soviet ships ever to operate there. Several ships may return home soon, but the expected arrival of additional combatants, such as two F-class submarines now en route, will keep the level of Soviet activity high. Soviet naval strength in the area is usually limited to about three combatants and several support vessels.

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